

OAC05: Packaging HIV prevention for different populations

Pragmatically approaching social network testing: Using a peer-driven community outreach model to extend reach of HIV testing services to networks of people who inject drugs in Ukraine



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 **AIDS 2022**

Conflict of interest disclosure

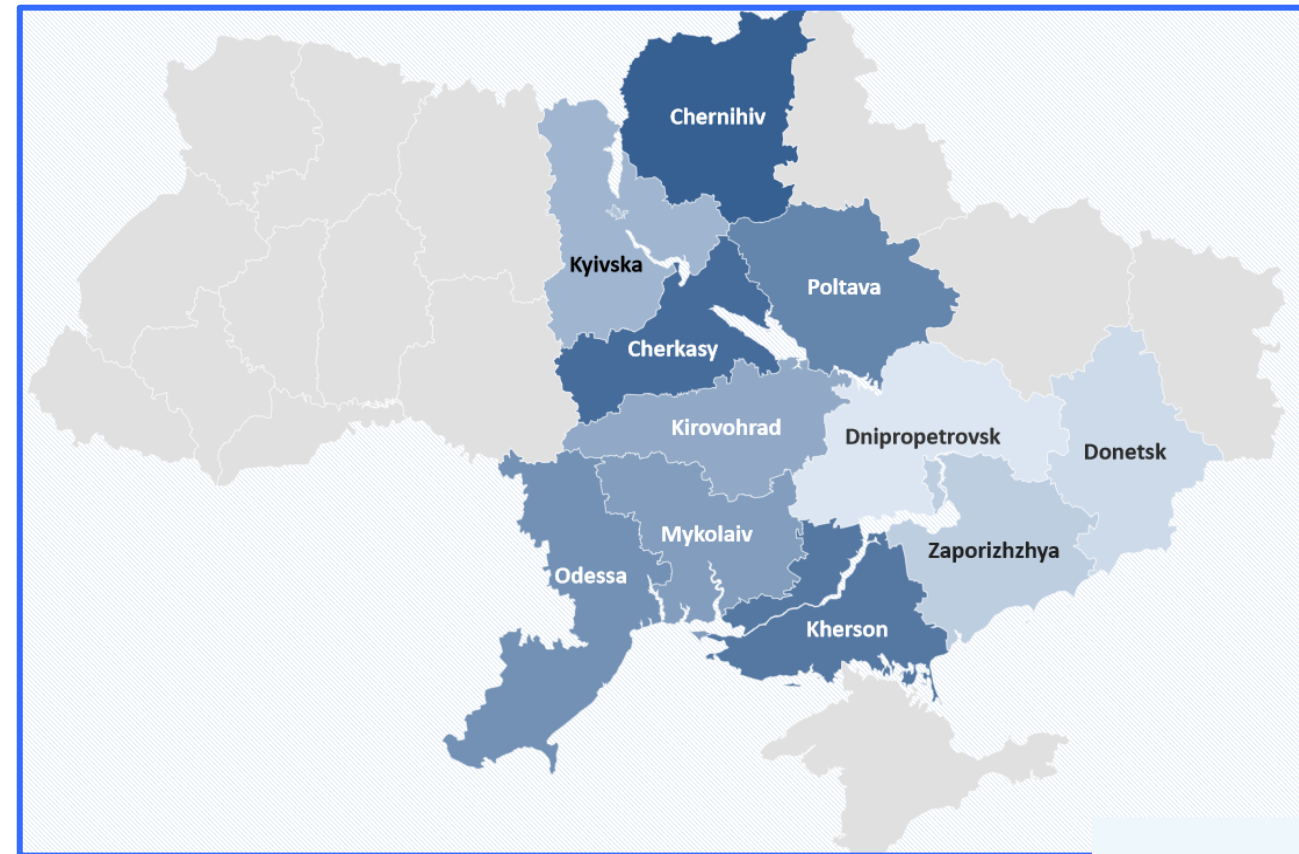
- I have no Conflict of Interest to report.
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Reaching people who inject drugs with HIV testing services in Ukraine

- HIV prevalence among PWID in Ukraine is 20.3% (IBBS 2020), up to four times higher than other key population groups.
- The USAID/PATH Serving Life project introduced and scaled a peer-driven community outreach model, leveraging social network testing (SNT) and index case testing (ICT) principles to reach people who inject drugs (PWID) and their partners through peer case-finders in 12 regions of Ukraine.

Figure 1: Serving Life-supported regions in Ukraine.



Source: 2020 Integrated Biological and Behavioral Assessment Survey




Innovative approach of involving peer case-finders among PWID

Selection of HIV case finders:


- Soon-to-be-released prisoners with a previous injecting drug use history whose imprisonment term was no longer than 3 years.
- Motivated to work in PWID communities.
- Hiring of ex-prisoners by partnering NGOs as HIV case finders/recruiters with official employment.
- Trained by NGOs on HIV outreach case finding and index testing in PWID communities.



Key features of Serving Life's SNT approach



Sourcing networks



Self-testing services



Prioritizing populations



Prevention services



Peer case finders



Linkage to care



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ICT using HIVST among PWID

NGO social worker or peer case-finder delivers HIVST kit to index partners either at home or distributed at a public location.

Individuals with reactive results are accompanied to health care facilities for confirmatory diagnosis and treatment initiation.

Opts for HIVST



HIVST delivery



HIVST result



Escort

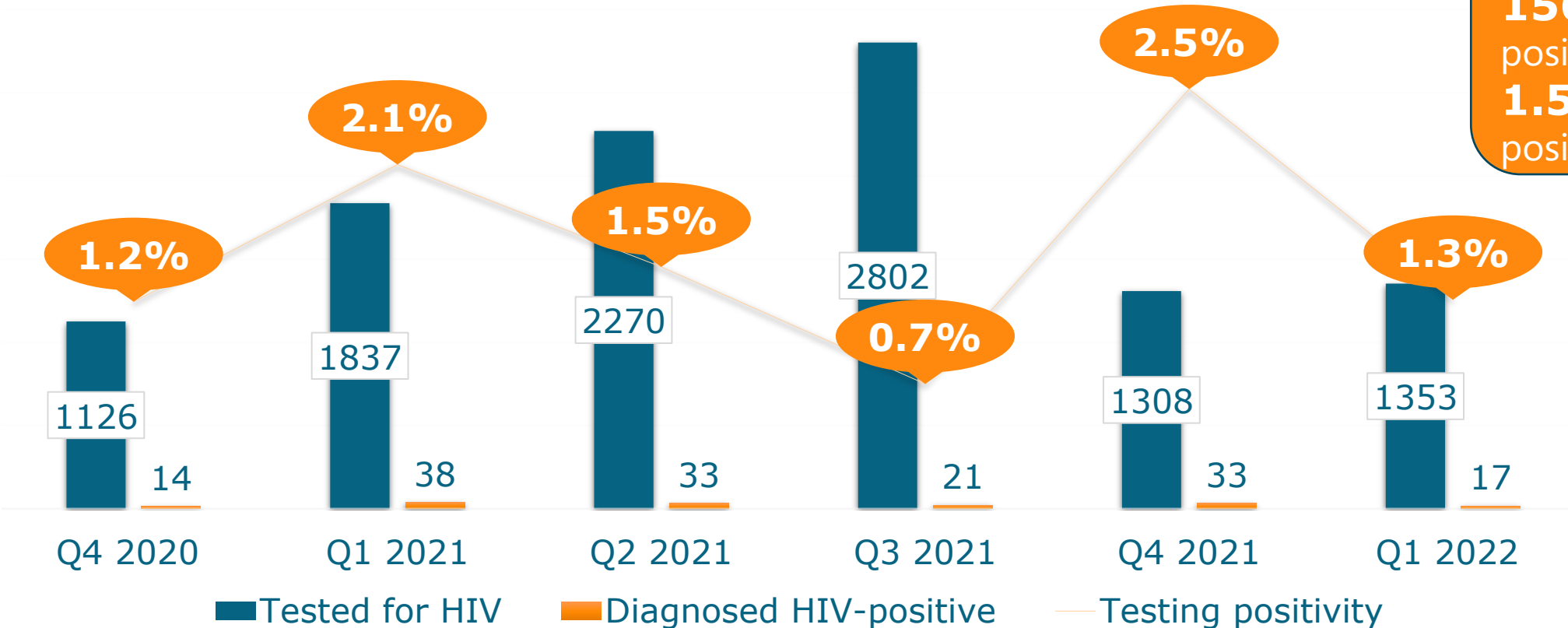


PWID living with HIV (index client) is offered ICT. Index partners will be offered HIVST (assisted or unassisted).

Case-finder provides assisted HIVST and interprets the result. Social worker follows up with index partner for result.

Results: SNT among PWID (first wave)

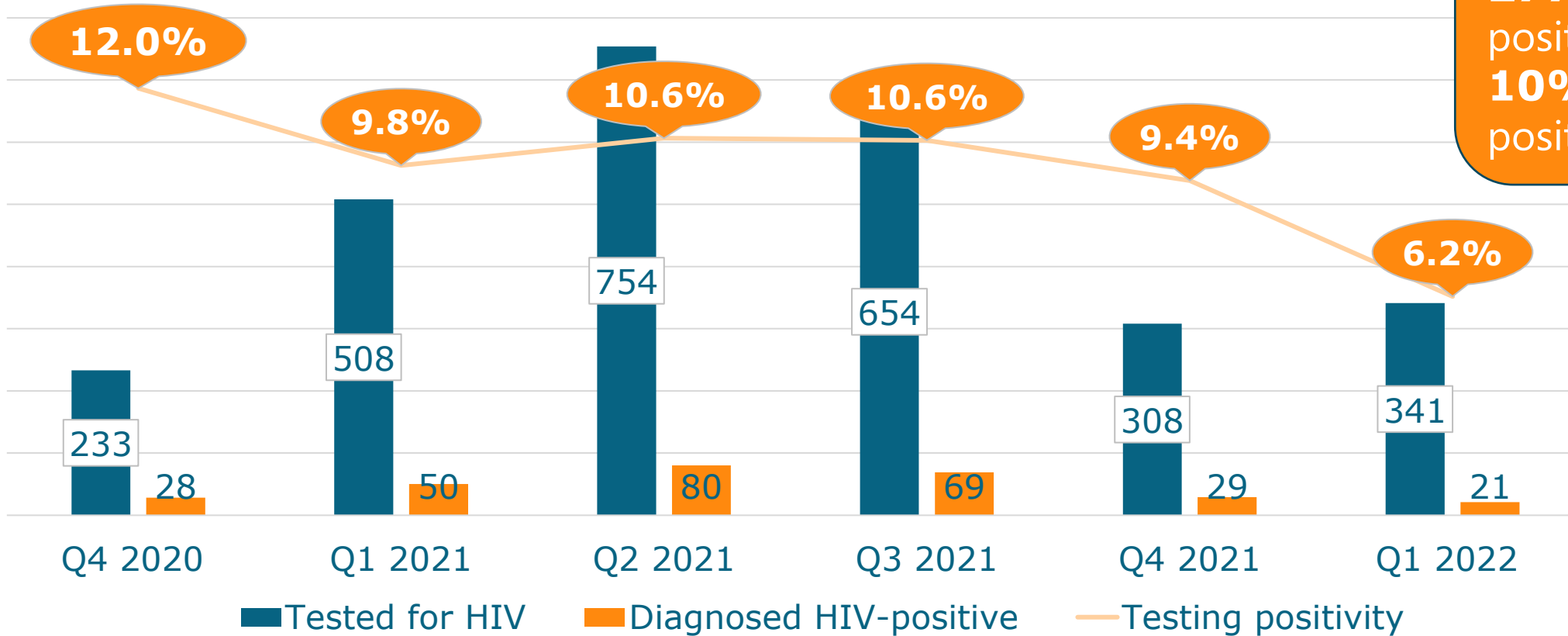
Figure 2: HIV testing volume and positivity by quarter, October 2020 -March 2022.



10,696 tested for HIV
156 diagnosed HIV-positive
1.5% testing positivity

Results: ICT among PWID living with HIV (second wave)

Figure 3: HIV testing volume and positivity by quarter, October 2020—March 2022.



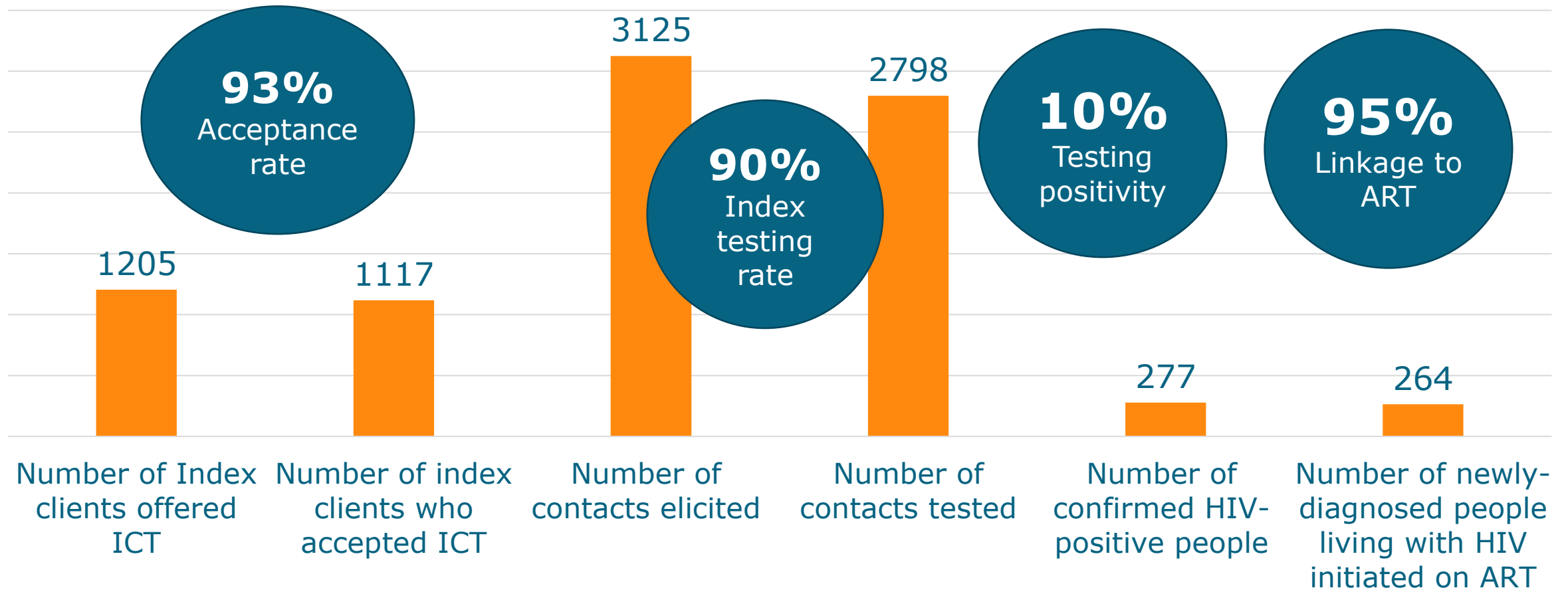
2,798 tested for HIV
 277 diagnosed HIV-positive
 10% testing positivity



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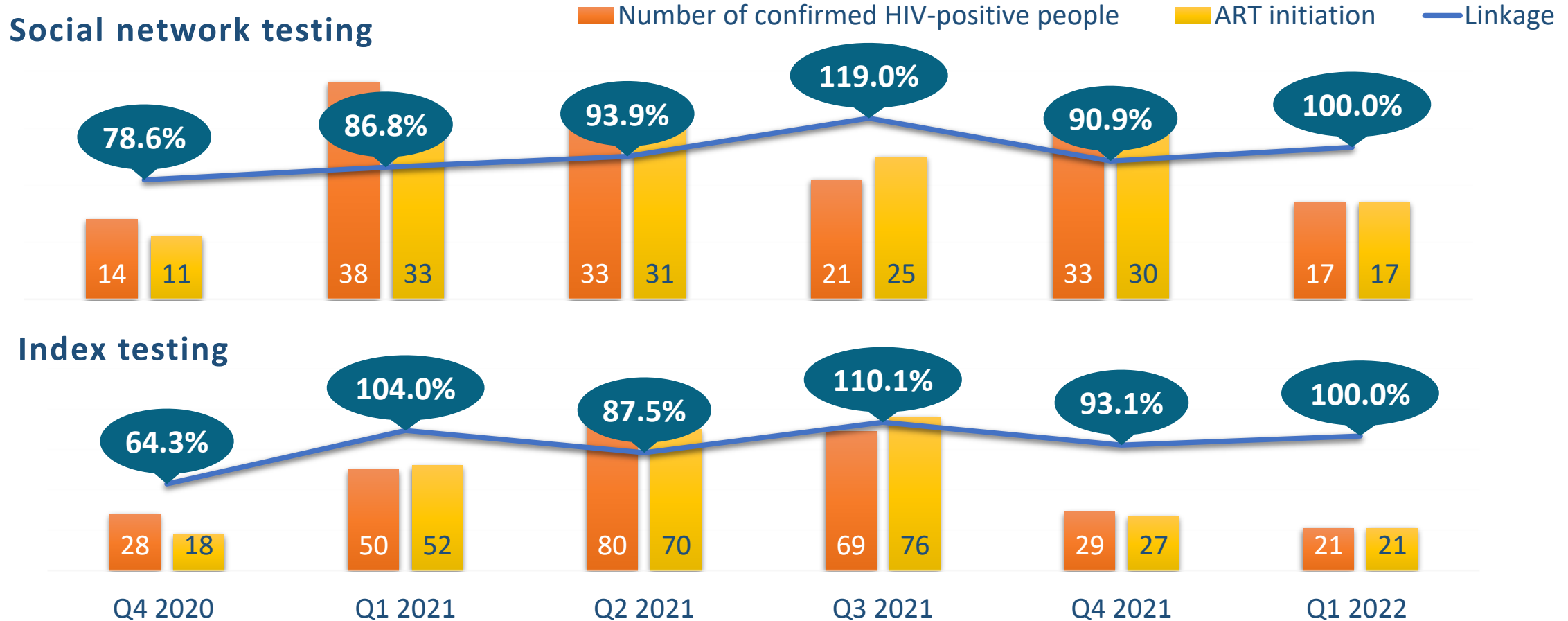
ICT service cascade among PWID

Figure 4: ICT cascade among PWID at community level, October 2020—March 2022.



Linkage to care of PWID with HIV reached through SNT and ICT

Figure 5: Comparison of linkage to care between waves by quarter, October 2020—March 2022.



Maintaining essential services for PWID during the Russian–Ukrainian war

Serving Life has continued to maintain delivery of essential health services for PWID in communities during war. As of June 30, 2022, the project:

Case-finding and linkage to care: Continued HIV case-finding and linkage to care among PWID, with **899** PWID tested for HIV, **22** newly diagnosed HIV positive, and **97%** PWID living with HIV initiated on ART.

Use of virtual platforms: Supported partner NGOs held **237** online/phone counseling sessions on early treatment initiation, treatment adherence and retention for PWID newly diagnosed with HIV.

Nutrition and hygiene support for personal well-being: Provided **334** food packages and hygiene kits to PWID with HIV on ART to help them remain adherent to ART.



HIV self-testing of a person who injects drugs in Poltava during the Russian-Ukrainian war.
Photo: Inessa Protaschyk/Poltava NGO

Conclusion and next steps

- Results highlight the promise of using a peer-driven, SNT-based outreach model to efficiently tap into networks of HIV-positive PWID and their contacts and link them to HIV services.
- Further expansion of this approach to reach PWID and their partners/contacts with HIV services is essential to achieving epidemic control in Ukraine.



Peer-driven SNT-based outreach activity within PATH-led USAID Serving Life project among people who injects drugs in Poltava. *Photo: Inessa Protaschyk/Poltava NGO*



Acknowledgments

- **United States Agency for International Development (USAID)**
- **U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR)**
- **13 national and regional partner NGOs**



Assisted self-testing to a PWID in Odesa by a peer case finder. *Photo: Olena Zhevets/Odesa NGO*

Thank you!

